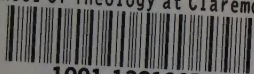


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BOOK OF AMOS

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BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN COLLOQUIAL SPEECH.

Edited by G. Currie Martin, M.A., B.D., and T. H. Robinson, M.A., D.D.

NUMBER ONE.

# THE BOOK OF AMOS

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THEODORE H. ROBINSON, M.A., D.D.

*Second (revised) Edition*

*PRICE SIXPENCE NET*

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## EDITORS' PREFACE

### TO FIRST EDITION.

THE modern translations that exist of parts or of the whole of the Old Testament are, as a rule, too expensive and too scholarly for the ordinary reader. In the case of the New Testament excellent help has been afforded by many recent translators, notably by Dr. Moffatt. In a wide experience among working men and women we have found frequent requests for a simple version of the Old Testament in similar language to that employed in the modern versions of the New Testament. By the generous help of our colleagues in this enterprise we are able to present a translation that is well within the reach of everyone, and that rests upon the best results of modern scholarship.

Literary elegance has been sacrificed to clearness of expression and simplicity of language, and we trust that in this way these messages of the prophets, that once touched the people with such power, may again reach the hearts of our own generation, and lead them to such inward and outward reforms as may make actual the spiritual and material utopia of which the prophets dreamed.

If the response is sufficiently encouraging we shall proceed to other books of the Old Testament, but we feel that the prophets have the primary claim, both owing to the obscurity of the ordinary translation and to the nature of the message these writers have to give.

Suggestions and criticisms for future issues will be welcomed by the Editors.

G.C.M.  
T.H.R.

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### NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

The continued demand for this booklet has encouraged the Publishers to produce this second edition, for which the Translator has made some revision of phrasing in a few instances.

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# THE BOOK OF AMOS

IN COLLOQUIAL SPEECH

## INTRODUCTION.

**A**MOS lived and prophesied in the days of Jeroboam II, king of Israel—that is, about 750 B.C. He refers in one place to an eclipse of the sun, which was probably that of June 14th, 763, so his activity must be placed before rather than after the middle of that century. He himself came from Judah, though the only place named as the scene of his utterances is the royal chapel at Bethel, where Jeroboam had his own special temple. But it is possible he spoke elsewhere in any place which provided him with a suitable audience.

### *The conditions of the period :*

As far as external prosperity goes, Israel was probably better off in the days of Jeroboam II than at any other time in her history, except, perhaps, in the reign of Solomon. Her old enemies, the Syrians of Damascus, were now too weak to offer serious opposition to her, and Jeroboam, who seems to have been a strong and in some ways a statesmanlike king, extended the territories of Israel more widely than any of his predecessors in the northern kingdom had done. Our knowledge of the history of the time is derived almost entirely from Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, but from them we can see something of the story of conquest and its results. The first of these was a great increase in commerce and wealth—even luxury. The ports of the Red Sea were now open, and brought the trade of the far East into the country. The Phœnician cities provided a gateway to the West, and from the North there would come caravans bearing the produce of central Asia. This affected the people of Samaria and other large cities especially, but the influence spread over the whole country. Luxuries which had never been known before poured into the land. Men were able to build solid stone houses instead of the old brick or clay dwellings, and to furnish them with costly wood instead of the poor native timber.

But with this there came a terrible change in the character and economic condition of the people. The peasant farmers who had been the backbone of the nation, sturdy and independent, brave in war and wise in peace, had been ruined by the troubles of the last century, and were exploited by shameless profiteers.

To get the necessities of life they mortgaged their tools, their clothing, their land and their persons. A class of capitalist moneylenders sprang up, who soon concentrated the wealth of the country into their own hands. Men lost their land and became serfs; they lost their freedom and became slaves. The corruption of the law courts helped the process, and it did not matter if a man were in the right or not; if he could bribe the judge, even with an insignificant offer, he could secure a decision which would give him what he wanted. The other person's land might pass into his possession, or the man himself become his slave. The result was the building up of large estates, cultivated by slave labour, and the consequent rotting of the nation.

Like Hosea and Isaiah after him, Amos seems never to have tired of denouncing the religion of Israel as he found it. It must be remembered that the revelation of God is a slow process, and that in his days it had never yet occurred to the ordinary man outside Israel, and not even to all Israel, that God wanted man to be morally good. Everybody believed in the existence of a large number of gods, and each tribe and people had its own. These gods were supposed to be like their worshippers in character, and what they wanted was the observance of rites, and the proper offering of sacrifices. The Israelites had a God whom they called Yahweh, and it was only as the result of the preaching of men like Amos that they learnt that Yahweh had any connection with righteousness. As a matter of fact, men believed—and this is true of almost all the religions in the world except Judaism and Christianity—that the gods (including Yahweh) demanded of men acts which would have been most strongly condemned in private life. There is no doubt that (as in some forms of Hinduism) sexual immorality was one of the sacraments. There is too much reason to believe that the Israelite honestly believed that Yahweh might, and at times did, require human sacrifice. The great message of Amos was that God was at least as good as man, and more, that he was supremely interested in goodness. No amount of formal religious observance could compensate for a man's wrongdoing. This was a new idea to most of the world, and, familiar though it seems to us who have been brought up in the Christian tradition, it yet marks one of the most profound revelations of divine truth that humanity has ever received.

## *The Book of Amos :*

The prophets spoke under the stress of a peculiar condition of mind and body, which we commonly call the ecstasy. Their utterances were short, and seem usually, if not always, to have been poetic in form. These short speeches were not always written down immediately, and some of the prophets do not seem to have used the pen at all. Their message, they felt, was for their own time. But these messages were seen to have a permanent value, and were often kept isolated and separate. Then they would be copied and collected into smaller or larger groups where the name of the prophet was known. To these would be added other isolated pieces which were anonymous. In the process many of them might undergo alteration. The language might be changed, so as to produce prose instead of poetry. Sometimes this was done by the prophet himself, but in the case of the earlier books it was clearly the work of the compilers of the small collections, or of someone even earlier than them. Sometimes the writing would be torn or badly copied, with the result that the compiler had only a fragment of the original oracle. Nevertheless he often put it in. The compiler arranged his material as seemed good to him, usually without regard to historical order, and seldom with any explicit reference to the occasion on which any oracle was delivered. Sometimes—as in the early chapters of the Book of Amos—the compiler shows a very high degree of literary and dramatic appreciation. There is reason to believe that he occasionally adopted a kind of formula, and fitted the oracles of the prophet into it. Amos i. and ii. are not the only examples of this tendency. Very often, in placing his matter together, he was guided by no surer principle than the occurrence of similar language and thought in two oracles which may have been uttered at very different times and under very different circumstances. In particular, compilers were fond of grouping together oracles about foreign nations.

In the Book of Amos, then, we have a collection of oracles of different dates and types, of which the great majority were probably uttered by Amos himself. The only indications we have as to the date and occasion of each are what we may gather from the oracle itself, and each must be treated separately without reference to its neighbours. This necessarily makes the



reading of the prophets a little difficult, but it is always possible to get their real message, in spite of the apparent "scrappiness" of the material.

*The Text of the Book :*

In ancient times all writing was necessarily done by hand. Generation after generation would copy the completed books of the prophets. Needless to say, mistakes were often made, and it is sometimes difficult to tell what words the compiler wrote. The original language of the book of Amos was Hebrew. In this tongue it was copied and recopied in Palestine, and some time before the second century B.C. copies were taken to Egypt or to other places where there were settlements of Jews. Naturally, the copying process went on, and mistakes would be made, but it would not often happen that the same mistake would be made in the Egyptian copies as in the Palestinian ones. We have to follow the history of both if we wish to understand how we are to work at the task of finding out what the book was like in its original form. Somewhere about the year 600 A.D. the Jewish Rabbis, who inherited the Palestinian tradition, decided on a single copy as being the orthodox text from their point of view. All others were gradually made away with, and it is from this that all our existing copies of the Hebrew Bible are descended. We have no Hebrew representatives of the Egyptian tradition, but in the second century B.C., Egyptian Jews translated their Bible, bit by bit, into Greek. This we still have, and we can use it to find out what the Egyptian text was like in the second century B.C. Of course there have been errors in the Greek text due to copying, but anyone who knows both languages can generally decide whether the mistake was made in Greek or Hebrew. It must be remembered that Amos spoke nearly twenty-seven centuries ago, and it would be very surprising if his words had come down to us without error. Nevertheless, by using the Greek text, representing the Egyptian tradition of at least two thousand years ago, and the Hebrew text representing the Palestinian tradition of about thirteen centuries ago, we can approach with some certainty to the actual words of the prophet. The present translation has been made from the traditional Hebrew text, the Greek being used to correct it where necessary or possible. In every case where the translator feels that there is an error in the Hebrew text, he has followed what seems to



him to have been the original form of the words, and noted the change at the foot of the page, giving there a rendering of words rejected. In these cases the traditional Hebrew text is indicated by the letters MT. Where the change is based on the ancient Greek translation, the fact is noted, and the letters LXX are used as a symbol for the words which the Greek translators had in the Hebrew copies they used. In some cases the original has had to be guessed, but in no case has the translator followed a guess of his own. Thus, a note like this :—<sup>1</sup>So LXX ; MT inserts "The Lord," means that the traditional Hebrew text has the word "Lord" at this point, whilst the text current amongst Greek speaking Jews in the second century B.C. had not. And a note :—<sup>2</sup>MT "Zion," means that while there is good ground for believing that the word translated is the one used by the prophet, the traditional Hebrew text has the word "Zion."\* In the pages that follow, actual translations from the Hebrew text is in ordinary type ; small type is used for headings and notes.

### *The Translation :*

The present translation is an attempt to reproduce the prophet's message in the simplest and plainest terms. No more freedom has been used than would be held to be necessary in translating from a Greek or Latin book. But a large part of the beauty and literary value of the book has been deliberately sacrificed. The poetic form and language—often of great power—has been obscured, in order to secure familiar terms. In the traditional English translations the prophets are often difficult to understand ; and are hardly easier in the very fine literary renderings of scholars like Professor McFadyen. Yet readers would do well to keep one or other of these translations beside them in studying the following version. But if this attempt, in spite of all its weakness, helps our generation to understand Amos, it will have succeeded, and will have prepared the way for better things in years to come.

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\*In such a case the absence of any mention of LXX may be taken to mean agreement between the Egyptian and the Palestinian traditions.



# AMOS.

i. 1. The following are oracles uttered by Amos, a herdsman from Tekoa. They came to him in visions during the reigns of Uzziah of Judah and Jeroboam ben Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

I. A short oracle which the compiler thought a suitable heading.

i. 2. He said :

Yahweh's voice will ring out from Zion and from Jerusalem like a lion's roar, so that the place where the flocks used to feed will be a scene of woe, and the peak of Carmel will be scorched with drought.

2. Syrian raids on eastern Palestine used to be carried out with unusual brutality.

i. 3-5. Yahweh has spoken to this effect :

Damascus has been guilty of so many crimes that it is impossible for me to reverse the sentence I have passed. She has tortured Gilead, threshing men with iron instruments. So I will burn to the very ground the fine palaces built by Hazael and Benhadad. In the vale of Aven and Beth Eden I will wipe out the population, officials and all. I will break the gate bars of Damascus, and the people of Syria will be deported to Kir.

These are the words of Yahweh.

3. The Philistines used to invade Judah and carry off people as slaves, selling them to the Edomites in the south.

i. 6-8. Yahweh has spoken to this effect :

Gaza is guilty of so many crimes that it is impossible for me to reverse the sentence I have passed. They have deported whole peoples and handed them over as slaves to Edom. So I will burn to the ground the wall and palaces of Gaza. And I will wipe out the people of Ashdod and Ashkelon, officials and all, and I will strike Ekron again and again, and the Philistines will be destroyed to the last man.

These are the words of Yahweh.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>4. The Phœnicians had been guilty of a similar offence.

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<sup>1</sup> So LXX ; MT inserts "the Lord."

<sup>2</sup> This oracle is attributed by some modern students to a speaker considerably later than the time of Amos.

i. 9-10. Yahweh has spoken to this effect :

Tyre is guilty of so many crimes that it is impossible for me to reverse the sentence I have passed. With entire disregard for the obligations of treaties and common humanity, they have handed over entire peoples as slaves to Edom. So I will burn to the ground the walls and mansions of Tyre.

5. An oracle possibly two hundred years later than the time of Amos,<sup>1</sup> condemning Edom for her treatment of Israel. In this case it probably refers to the part played by the Edomites in the destruction of Jerusalem, in B.C. 586, when they sided with the Chaldeans, and gloated over the fall of Judah.

ii. 11, 12. Yahweh has spoken to this effect :

Edom is guilty of so many crimes that it is impossible for me to reverse the sentence I have passed. Sword in hand, he has persecuted those of the same blood as himself. He has crushed down all human feeling, and has kept up an endless and undying fury of vindictiveness. So I will burn to the ground the walls and palatial buildings of Teman and Bozrah.

6. The Ammonites were a semi-Arab tribe living to the east of Palestine. They used to raid their more civilised neighbours, and treat them with the utmost cruelty, especially the Israelites east of Jordan.

i. 13-15. Yahweh has spoken to this effect :

Ammon is guilty of so many crimes that it is impossible for me to reverse the sentence I have passed. In their land-grabbing passion they have ripped up the pregnant women of Gilead. So I will burn to the ground the walls and mansions of Rabbah, with battle cry and sweeping storm, and their king and nobles will be deported.

These are the words of Yahweh.

7. In war with Edom, the Moabites had violated the royal tombs of the country, and had burnt the bones they found there.

ii. 1-3. Yahweh has spoken to this effect :

Moab is guilty of so many crimes that it is impossible for me to reverse the sentence I have passed. They even burnt the very bones of the king of Edom to a white ash. So I will burn to the ground the mansions of Kirioth. And amid roar and triumph-shouts and trumpet-calls of battle Moab shall die, and I will wipe

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<sup>1</sup> It should be remarked that modern students of the Old Testament differ as to the date of this oracle. Some prefer to assign it to Amos himself.

out all those of rank and authority among them, killing them together with the rest of the people.

These are the words of Yahweh.

<sup>1</sup>8. Judah is condemned for her failure to fulfil the moral demands of Yahweh. The words might have been uttered at most periods in her history.

ii. 4, 5. Yahweh has spoken to this effect :

Judah is guilty of so many crimes that it is impossible for me to reverse the sentence I have passed. By her breach of Yahweh's laws she has deliberately rejected his instructions, and she has been led away by the false gods which her ancestors followed. So I will burn to the ground the mansions of Jerusalem.

9. The corruption of justice in Israel.

ii. 6, 7a. Yahweh has spoken to this effect :

Israel has been guilty of so many crimes that it is impossible for me to reverse the sentence I have passed. The price of a pair of shoes is enough to secure the enslavement of a poor man. They make the lower classes step aside for them, and when a man is helpless, they have used the opportunity to trample down his very head.<sup>2</sup>

I O. Religion, as Amos saw it, did not require men to be righteous.

ii. 7b-12. Yahweh speaks :

Father and son both resort to the same temple-girl. Instead of representing me as holy, they make me appear morally foul. The very cloths<sup>3</sup> which they spread beside all the altars are garments taken in pledge, and the sacramental wine which they drink in their God's house has been procured by oppressive fines.

All this in spite of the fact that when you appeared in the country I destroyed the Amorites for you. The latter were as tall as the highest cedars and sturdy as the strongest oaks, but I blasted them root and branch. What is more, I fetched you up from Egypt, and, after leading you for forty years in the desert, I helped you to turn the Amorites out.

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<sup>1</sup> This oracle is almost certainly later than the time of Amos. Its presence is probably due to someone who felt that the list of nations was incomplete without the mention of Judah.

<sup>2</sup> So LXX; MT adds "upon the dust of the earth."

<sup>3</sup> So LXX; MT inserts "upon."

Further, I appointed some of your people to be prophets, and some of your young men to be Nazirites. <sup>1</sup>But you forbade the prophets to prophesy, and you make the Nazirites break their vows by giving them wine. O you Israelites! Does all this mean nothing to you?

This is Yahweh's oracle.<sup>1</sup>

I 1. An oracle which may refer to an invasion which Amos expected, and describes the collapse of the morale of the army of Israel.

ii. 13-16. I will make you rock<sup>2</sup> from the very bottom like a cart loaded with sheaves, so that the speed of the fastest runner will be useless to him, and the strongest will not retain his strength, nor the bravest save himself, nor the archer stand his ground, nor <sup>3</sup>the stout-hearted find courage among soldiers, but he shall fling away his weapons and take to flight.<sup>3</sup>

This is Yahweh's oracle.

I 2. There is a reason for everything. Things that one observes in the country always imply something more than what immediately appears. So the existence of suffering proves that Yahweh is at work, vindicating his moral laws: the prophet speaks because he has heard Yahweh's voice.

iii. 1-8. Listen to what Yahweh has said of you, you Israelites:<sup>4</sup>

Just because you are the only nation in the world with whom I have come into close relation, I will punish you for all your crimes. If two people walk together, does it not prove that they have arranged to go the same way? If a lion roars in the forest, does it not prove that he has prey? If a lion growls,<sup>5</sup> does it not prove that he has caught something? If a bird drops towards the ground,<sup>6</sup> does it not prove that there is something to attract him? If a ground-trap is sprung, does it not prove that it has caught something? Can the alarm be sounded in a city without people being frightened? If there is suffering in a city, does it not prove that Yahweh is at work?

<sup>1</sup> . . . <sup>1</sup>MT has these words in a different order, which is hardly intelligible.

<sup>2</sup> In the present state of our knowledge, MT seems meaningless. This rendering assumes a change of one letter.

<sup>3</sup> . . . <sup>3</sup>MT is very uncertain, and almost certainly erroneous. The above is probably not far from the original form.

<sup>4</sup> MT adds "All the family whom I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying."

<sup>5</sup> MT inserts "from his den."

<sup>6</sup> So LXX; MT adds "on a snare."



Yahweh, the Master, does nothing without telling his plans to the prophets, his slaves; and since Yahweh, the Master, has spoken, a man can no more help prophesying than he can help shuddering at the lion's roar.

I 3. The moral chaos which Amos saw in city life.

iii. 9, 10. A proclamation to be made in the finest quarters of the cities of Assyria<sup>1</sup> and Egypt:

Come together to the hills round Samaria, and see the utter confusion and oppression in the city. People are absolutely ignorant of the meaning of honesty, and their hoarded wealth<sup>2</sup> is simply what they have gained by crimes of violence.

<sup>3</sup>This is Yahweh's oracle.<sup>3</sup>

I 4. Threat of a foreign enemy.

iii. 11. This is the reason why the Lord Yahweh has said:

<sup>4</sup>Your land <sup>5</sup>shall be surrounded by enemies,<sup>5</sup> and your strength will be flung down and your mansions looted.

I 5. The completeness of the coming destruction. The metaphor was probably suggested by the prophet's own experience.

iii. 12, 13. Yahweh has spoken to this effect:

It sometimes happens when an animal has been carried off by a lion, all that the shepherd can rescue is a pair of knuckle bones or the tip of an ear. In just the same way, the corner of a single bed, or a piece<sup>6</sup> of a rug, will be enough to hold all the people of Israel and Samaria who will escape. Listen to this; remember it, and repeat it in the country of Jacob.

This is the oracle of Yahweh, God of Hosts.

I 6. People were in the habit of taking refuge in temples, and claiming the protection of the god by taking hold of the horns of the altar. But no religious rite will henceforth be any protection for wrongdoers. The shrine and altar themselves will be affected, so that there will be no means of securing exemption from punishment.

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<sup>1</sup> So LXX; MT has "Ashdod."

<sup>2</sup> MT adds "in their palaces."

<sup>3</sup> . . . <sup>3</sup> Placed by MT after "honesty."

<sup>4</sup> So LXX; MT has "the."

<sup>5</sup> . . . <sup>5</sup> MT is uncertain, but this seems to be what Amos meant.

<sup>6</sup> MT very uncertain, apparently mentioning Damascus. But this is probably the idea that Amos had in mind.

iii. 14, 15. When I punish Israel for breaking my law, I will pay special attention to the altar<sup>1</sup> of Bethel. The horns of the altar will be cut off and thrown down to the ground. And I will strike down the winter houses and the summer residences. And those mansions with all their ivory and ebony<sup>2</sup> decorations will be so wrecked that not a trace of them will be left.

This is Yahweh's oracle.

17. At bottom it was the greed and luxury of the women which was responsible for the terrible social conditions of Israel.

iv. 1-3. Listen to this, you women of Samaria—you great Bashan cows! You grind down and oppress the poor lower classes. You are always nagging your husbands for money to buy drink. So Yahweh<sup>3</sup> has taken this solemn oath by his own holy self:

The time is coming when men shall drive fish hooks and barbs into your soft flesh, and you will be dragged straight through the holes that have been broken in the city walls, and flung on to dung heaps.

This is Yahweh's oracle.

18. Amos exposes the false nature of the religious ideals of his time. This is probably one of the earlier oracles, uttered during the prophet's visit to Bethel.

iv. 4, 5. Come to the sanctuaries of Bethel and Gilgal—but all you will do when you get there will be to commit more and more iniquity. Bring your morning sacrifices—do! Take three days over offering your tithes—by all means! Burn your sweet sacrifices in praise—yes, and keep them pure of leaven! Call out the amount of your subscriptions—shout it out loud that all may hear you! That is the kind of religion you Israelites really like!

This is the Lord Yahweh's oracle.

19. In this and the four following oracles Amos describes natural calamities which have fallen on Israel. They probably occurred in the same year, and if the first verse of the book is to be trusted, it was two or three years after the prophet's first appearance at Bethel. The earthquake of i. 1 seems already to have taken place. This oracle speaks of famine.

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<sup>1</sup> MT "altars."

<sup>2</sup> MT "many." This reading is suggested by comparison with Ezekiel xxvii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> So LXX; MT inserts "the Lord."

iv. 6. In all your cities I kept your teeth clean by giving you no food, and everywhere there was a shortage of bread. Yet you did not learn that you must come back to me.

This is Yahweh's oracle.

## 20. Drought.

iv. 7, 8. Three months before the harvest, when rain was most needed, I kept it back from you—it was I that did it. Sometimes I sent rain on one city and not on another. Sometimes rain fell in one district alone, and that in which it did not fall would dry up. So the people of two or three cities had to go to one to get water to drink, and there was not enough for them. Yet you did not learn that you must come back to me.

This is Yahweh's oracle.

## 21. Blight on the crops.

iv. 9. I afflicted you with blight and mildew; I scorched up<sup>1</sup> your gardens and vineyards, and more than once locusts devoured your figs and olives. Yet you did not learn that you must come back to me.

This is Yahweh's oracle.

## 22. An epidemic.

iv. 10. I sent an epidemic on you<sup>2</sup>; I killed your young men in wars<sup>3</sup>; I made your camp reek with the stench of rotten corpses. Yet you did not learn that you must come back to me.

This is Yahweh's oracle.

## 23. The earthquake.

iv. 11. I brought on you an earthquake as frightful as that which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a charred stick, just snatched from the fire in time to be not quite burnt up. Yet you did not learn that you must come back to me.

This is Yahweh's oracle.

## 24. Natural calamities prove the power of Yahweh.

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<sup>1</sup> MT has "to multiply."

<sup>2</sup> MT Inserts the words "in the way of Egypt."

<sup>3</sup> MT inserts "with the captivity of your horses."

iv. 12, 13. That is why I do this to you, Israel. <sup>1</sup>Because I will certainly do it, prepare to meet your God, Israel. For, you see, Yahweh is the name of him who modelled the hills and shaped the wind, and told men his thoughts, and made dawn and dark, and walks on the high ground of the earth.<sup>1</sup>

25. The death of purity and promise in Israel. This is quite possibly one of the last oracles uttered by Amos, and may have been suggested by the sight of an actual funeral.

v. 1, 2. Listen, you Israelites, to this funeral hymn which I am about to sing over you :

Fallen is Israel, the virgin,  
Never to rise ;  
Earthbound, with none to uplift her,  
Prostrate she lies.

<sup>2</sup>26. A disastrous war is in prospect. Probably Amos foresaw the coming of the Assyrians, though there is no record of their attacks on Israel in his time.

v. 3. This is what the Lord Yahweh has said <sup>3</sup>to Israel.<sup>3</sup>

In every city nine-tenths of the men shall fall in battle. Out of every thousand only a hundred shall be left, and out of every hundred only ten.

27. Amos' contemporaries thought that religion consisted in pilgrimages to the famous shrines. This, he says, is not true.

v. 4-6. Yahweh has spoken to Israel to this effect :

You must come to me if you want to save your lives. Do not come to the Bethel priests, and do not go to Gilgal or make long journeys to Beersheba. The people of Gilgal will all be carried off, and Bethel will come to utter ruin. You must come to Yahweh if you want to save your lives ; otherwise, he will blaze out over northern Israel as a destructive and unquenchable fire.<sup>4</sup>

28. A fragment from an oracle which denounced the corruption of the law courts.

v. 7. . . . who turn the law into poison, and put an end to all the country's rights.

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<sup>1</sup> . . . . <sup>1</sup> Some modern students regard this passage as a compiler's insertion.

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the words from "in every city" to the end of the verse form part of the funeral hymn of §25. In that case the introductory words in v. 3 will be a copyist's mistake.

<sup>3</sup> MT places these words at the end of the verse.

<sup>4</sup> MT adds "for Bethel."

29. Yahweh is supreme in nature and history.

v. 8, 9. Yahweh is the name of the God who made the Pleiades and Orion, and arranged that day should follow night, and night follow day. It is he who called up the ocean and poured it over the earth. It is he who brought down<sup>1</sup> ruin<sup>2</sup> and destruction on castles and on forts.<sup>3</sup>

30. Amos had apparently been attacked, not only by Amaziah, but also by others. A fragment for which no accurate dating is possible.

v. 10. . . . they hate and loathe any honest criticism. . . .

31. Capitalist moneylenders, after getting possession of land, retained the old owner as a working farmer, and charged him rent in the form of agricultural produce.

v. 11, 12a. . . . you trample down the lower classes, and squeeze load after load<sup>4</sup> of corn from them. Therefore you shall neither live in the marble mansions you have built, nor enjoy the wine of the lovely vineyards you have planted. For—as I well know—your crimes are untold, and your sins tremendous.

32. So corrupt are the judges, that it is wiser to suffer injustice than to appeal to them.

v. 12b, 13. . . . you take bribes to persecute people who have done no harm, and wrong the poor in the courts. Therefore sensible people will keep still, for it is a disastrous time.

<sup>5</sup>33. Another appeal for righteousness.

v. 14, 15. You must aim at good and not evil if you would save your lives, and if Yahweh the God of Hosts is to be with you, as you say he is. You must hate evil and love goodness. You must see that real justice has its place in the law courts. If you do these things, then Yahweh the God of Hosts will be kind to such Israelites as remain.

34. The moral corruption of the people can only end in disaster.

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<sup>1</sup> So LXX; MT has "smiled."

<sup>2</sup> So LXX; MT has "destruction."

<sup>3</sup> So LXX; MT has "and destruction comes on forts."

<sup>4</sup> . . . <sup>4</sup> So LXX; MT has "a load."

<sup>5</sup> Possibly to be joined to 32 to form one oracle.

v. 16, 17. This is what Yahweh<sup>1</sup> the God of Hosts has said :

In every square and street there shall be mourning and moaning. Farmers in the country will send for professional mourners to wail and howl, and when I pass through the heart of your land there will be sorrow in every vineyard instead of glee.

It is Yahweh who has said this.

35. People believed that when Israel was in real need, then Yahweh would interpose and bring a day of victory and a time of peace for his people. Amos had to tell people that Yahweh would indeed reveal himself, but it would be to avenge the cause of righteousness, not that of Israel. Her need was very real, but it was not the need people had in mind.

v. 18-20. You people who want the Millennium so badly, what good will the Millennium do you ? I tell you it means darkness and not light. Suppose a man, trying to escape from a lion, finds a bear in front of him, and takes refuge in a hut and leans his hand on the wall and a snake bites him—that is what the Millennium will be like. It will be absolute pitch darkness, without a single ray of light.

36. In order, as they thought, to honour Yahweh, people had introduced features of foreign worship, and had even borrowed gods from Babylon and other nations. Amos did not believe in any kind of ritual.

v. 21-27. I hate and loathe your festivals. Your special services do not affect me at all. When you burn offerings to me I do not enjoy your gifts, and I take no notice at all of your richest sacrifices. Do stop worrying me with your noisy hymns ; I cannot bear the “ music ” of your harps. What I want is an unfailing, brimming river of justice and righteousness. All those forty years that you<sup>2</sup> were in the wilderness, you brought *me* no sacrifices. As it is, the canopy of your King-god and <sup>3</sup>Kewan, your Star-god, and the images you have made for yourselves<sup>3</sup>—all these things you will load on to your backs when I deport you away beyond Damascus.

These are the words of Yahweh, whom we call God of Hosts.

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<sup>1</sup> So LXX ; MT inserts “ the Lord.”

<sup>2</sup> MT adds “ O house of Israel.”

<sup>3</sup> . . . <sup>3</sup> So LXX ; MT has the words in this order : “ Kiyyun (sic) your images and the star of your god whom you have made for yourselves.”



37. The luxury prevalent in Israel in the latter days of Jeroboam II brought national conceit and jingoism with it. One of the lessons the prophet had to teach was that other nations were as good as they.

vi. 1-7. The complacent and thoughtless people of Israel<sup>1</sup> and Samaria are utterly hateful. They think they are by far the most distinguished people in the world.<sup>2</sup> But if you go and look at Calneh, and then at the great city of Hamath, and the Philistine city of Gath, you will find that Israel is no more powerful and has no wider territories than these kingdoms had. And by putting off thinking about the day of calamity to a distant time, they bring appalling disaster the nearer. They lounge on ivory sofas, they sprawl on their beds, they send to the farms for lambs and veal to eat. They twitter to the music of the harp; they think their orchestra as good as David's. They drink the most expensive wines, and use the costliest toilet preparations. But for the wreck and ruin of their fellow-countrymen they have not the smallest sympathy. For all this they will be the first to be deported, and there will be no more of the shouting of these sprawlers.

38. Spoken when Israel was threatened by a terrible epidemic.

vi. 8, 10. Yahweh<sup>3</sup> has sworn by himself<sup>4</sup> :

I loathe the pride of Jacob, and I hate its mansions. So I will shut up the city and everything in it. <sup>5</sup>And if there are still ten men left in a house, they shall all die.<sup>5</sup> And when a man's uncle helps the undertaker to lift up the corpse and carry it out of the house, he will ask the man left inside, "Is there anybody left with you?" And he will reply, "Not a single one." And (instead of saying "Yahweh bless you") he will say, "Sh!" because one must not mention the name of Yahweh.

39. A fragment, probably from the time of the exile.

vi. 11. Yahweh has ordered that all the houses, big and little, shall be smashed into fragments.

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<sup>1</sup> MT has "Zion."

<sup>2</sup> MT adds "and the house of Israel shall come to them."

<sup>3</sup> So LXX; MT adds "the Lord."

<sup>4</sup> So LXX; MT adds "this is the oracle of Yahweh, God of Hosts."

<sup>5</sup> . . . <sup>5</sup> This sentence seems misplaced; possibly it really belongs to §26, and should come at the end of v. 3.

40. Another attack on the corruption of the law courts.

vi. 12. Do you expect horses to gallop up a precipice? or would you drive an ox-plough over the sea?<sup>1</sup> Quite as reasonable is your turning of Justice into bitterness, so that one might as well poison one's self as go into court with a good case.

41. During the century which preceded the time of Amos, the Syrians of Damascus had taken possession of the greater part of the Israelite territory east of the Jordan. Jeroboam's troops had gradually recovered this, and when Amos spoke, they were gloating over the capture of two cities of this district, Lodebar in Gilead, and Karnaim in Bashan. The oracle seems to have lost its opening words.

vi. 13, 14... you who are gloating over the capture of Lodebar<sup>2</sup> and saying "How powerful are we to have taken Karnaim!" O you Israelites!<sup>3</sup> I will set a nation at you which will crush you from the Hamath frontier to the river of the Arabah.

42. The first of a series of visions. Some of these picture calamities which might have come, but did not, other calamities which would actually befall Israel. This is a vision of a locust plague.

vii. 1-3. The Lord Yahweh sent me the following vision:

I saw a flight of locusts<sup>4</sup>—this happened after the first crop of grass had been mowed and sent to the king as tribute, and the second crop was just beginning to come up—<sup>5</sup>and it devoured<sup>5</sup> every green blade in the whole country. And I said, "O Lord Yahweh! do forgive us! How can so small a nation as Jacob ever recover from this?" And Yahweh changed his mind and said, "Very well, it shall not happen."

43. Another vision. A universal fire.

vii. 4-6. Yahweh<sup>6</sup> sent me the following vision:

He called<sup>7</sup> blazing fire,<sup>7</sup> and it devoured a mighty ocean, and it began to devour the land. And I said, "O Lord Yahweh! do stop! How can so small a nation as Jacob ever recover from this?" And the Lord Yahweh changed his mind about this and said, "Very well; this, too, shall not happen."

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<sup>1</sup> . . . <sup>1</sup> MT has "shall one plough with oxen?"

<sup>2</sup> MT has "not a word."

<sup>3</sup> So LXX; MT has "this is the oracle of Yahweh, God of Hosts."

<sup>4</sup> So LXX; MT has "one who modelled a locust."

<sup>5</sup> . . . <sup>5</sup> MT has "and it shall be that if it has devoured."

<sup>6</sup> So LXX; MT adds "the Lord."

<sup>7</sup> . . . <sup>7</sup> MT has "to contend by fire."

44. Another vision. Israel is tested with a plumbline, and seems to be so far out of the straight that she must be pulled down altogether.

vii. 7-9. Yahweh<sup>1</sup> sent me the following vision :

I saw the Lord standing by a wall with a plumbline in his hand. And Yahweh said to me, "What are you looking at, Amos ?" "A plumbline," I said. And Yahweh said to me, "I am putting a plumbline against the heart of Israel my people, for I cannot keep on overlooking things. And the shrines of Isaac and the chapels of Israel shall be desolate and deserted, and I will attack Jeroboam's dynasty with the sword."

45. The Israelite government often had reason to fear revolution engineered by the prophets. It was such a revolution that had put Jehu, Jeroboam's ancestor, on the throne. Amaziah, as Priest of Bethel, was practically one of the Ministers of the Crown, and when he heard Amos talking as he did, jumped to the conclusion that the political party of the prophets was once more trying to overthrow the government, and put a nominee of their own in power. He thought that Amos was an agent of this party, and that his aim was to rouse people against the King and his Ministers.

vii. 10-17. Amaziah, priest of Bethel, sent this report to Jeroboam, king of Israel :

"Amos is plotting against you among the people, and the world can no longer stand talk like this. He says Jeroboam will die a violent death, and that the whole population will be deported."

And Amaziah said to Amos :

"Be off, you seer, into Judah as fast as you can ! That is the place for you to make a living by prophesying. On no account must you ever prophesy at Bethel again ; this is the royal chapel and palace."

"A professional prophet," replied Amos, "I certainly am not. I keep sheep,<sup>2</sup> and grow sycamore figs, and Yahweh took me away from my work and told me to go and prophesy to his people Israel. Now listen to what Yahweh has to say to you. You tell me not to dribble prophecies over Israel and Isaac. So this is Yahweh's message to you :

Your wife will be driven to live on the streets. Your children, boys and girls alike, will be slaughtered. Your estate will be surveyed and divided up. You yourself will die on unholy ground, and Israel will be deported far from their own country."

<sup>1</sup> So LXX : MT omits "Yahweh."

<sup>2</sup> So LXX ; MT has a curious word which may mean "herdsman."

46. Another vision, that of a basket of summer fruit. There is a pun in the language of the prophet, the Hebrew word for "summer" being almost the same as the Hebrew word for "end."

viii. 1-3. Yahweh<sup>1</sup> sent me the following vision :

I saw a basket of summer fruit. And he said to me, "What are you looking at, Amos?" I said, "A basket of summer fruit." "Ah," replied Yahweh, "a summary end is coming for my people Israel. I will never again overlook anything that they do, and the women's choir in the palace will just howl in their grief, for then<sup>2</sup> every place will be choked with corpses."<sup>3</sup>

47. People used to keep their Sabbath by doing no work, but they had their minds on their business, with its cheating and oppression, all the time, and never used their rest to think of God.

viii. 4-8. Listen to this, you who trample down and lord it over<sup>4</sup> the poorer classes :

You sigh all day Sunday, "What a long time to wait till Monday morning! I wish it would come quickly, so that we might get back to our selling of corn and giving of short measure, and running up of prices and tilting of the scales! And buying slaves cheap—a pair of shoes each will be enough! And making a profit out of the dust of chaff!" Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob :

Never will I forget anything that they do! The only result of this will be another terrible earthquake which shall bring sorrow on everyone living in the land. The whole earth shall swell<sup>5</sup> and sink, just like the rising and falling Nile.<sup>6</sup>

48. There was an eclipse of the sun on June 14th, 763 B.C., which was probably nearly total in Israel. This, of course, passed over. But Amos, knowing nothing of astronomy, saw in it a warning of the complete extinction of the sun.

viii. 9, 10. The time is coming—this is the Lord Yahweh's oracle—when I will make the sun set at midday and darken the earth in broad daylight. And I will upset your holidays and

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<sup>1</sup> So LXX; MT inserts "the Lord."

<sup>2</sup> MT inserts the words "This is Yahweh the Lord's oracle."

<sup>3</sup> In MT two words follow, which, in the present state of our knowledge, are unintelligible.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX; MT has "make them cease."

<sup>5</sup> So LXX; MT inserts "and shall be driven out."

<sup>6</sup> So LXX; MT has "light."

hymns, and turn them into grief and wailing. Everybody will wear mourning, and it will be as bad as if every man had lost his only child, and the country will perish in bitter sorrow.

49. Spoken in time of famine, due to the failure of the annual rains.

viii. 11, 12. Remember, the time is coming—this is <sup>1</sup>Yahweh's oracle—when I shall make everybody hungry. Food and drink will not satisfy that hunger and thirst; it will be the word<sup>2</sup> of Yahweh that they want. And people will wander to and fro, up and down and across the country, trying to find the word of Yahweh. But they will never find it.

50. Amos attributes the drought and famine to the false worship of the people.

viii. 13, 14. The time will come when girls in their beauty and men in their strength will faint with thirst. <sup>3</sup>And they shall fall and never rise again,<sup>3</sup> because they swear by the wicked religion of Samaria, using in their oath the words, "By the god of Dan," "By the deity<sup>4</sup> of Samaria."

51. The last vision. Yahweh the destroyer.

ix. 1-4. I saw Yahweh standing by the altar. He said :

Strike the tops of the pillars so hard that the thresholds may be shaken as if by an earthquake, and crush the heads of all the people. If any of them are left, I will have them killed by the sword. Even if they run away and try to escape, their flight will not save them. If they were to dig right through the earth to the home of the dead, my hand would reach down and drag them back. If they were to climb into the sky I would bring them down. If they were to hide in caves on the top of Mount Carmel, I would hunt them out and drag them away. If they were to conceal themselves from my sight at the bottom of the sea, <sup>5</sup>I would order the great Serpent to bite them. And if their enemies carry them off to slavery, <sup>5</sup>I will order them to be slaughtered, and watch for every opportunity of doing them, not good, but harm.

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<sup>1</sup> So LXX; MT inserts "the Lord."

<sup>2</sup> So LXX; MT has "words."

<sup>3</sup> . . . <sup>3</sup> MT has these words at the end of the oracle.

<sup>4</sup> So LXX; MT has "way."

<sup>5</sup> MT prefixes "thence" in each place.

52. The majesty of Yahweh.

ix. 5. 6. It is the Lord Yahweh of Hosts, at whose touch the earth melts, and he brings sorrow on every one living on it, while it swells and sinks like the rising and falling Nile. It is he who builds his palace in the sky, and lays the foundations of his dome upon the earth. It is he who calls the ocean and pours it over the land—Yahweh is his name.

53. Yahweh makes no distinction between different races. The Israelites thought that he was their God alone, and did not care for other races. This impression has to be corrected.

ix. 7. Do you realise that I think of you Israelites just as I think of African negroes? It is true that I brought up Israel from Egypt, but it is equally true that I was responsible for the coming of the Philistines from Crete and of the Syrians from Kir.

<sup>1</sup>This is Yahweh's oracle.<sup>1</sup>

54. A threat of utter destruction.

ix. 8a. I tell you that the Lord Yahweh is on the watch for the sinful kingdom, and <sup>2</sup>will wipe it out of existence.

<sup>3</sup>This is Yahweh's oracle.<sup>3</sup>

[The desire to tone down the horror of the general destruction has led a compiler or a copyist to add the following small group of oracles, which there is no reason to attribute to Amos himself.]

55. An addition made to the last oracle.

ix. 8b, 9. Only I will not absolutely destroy all the nation of Jacob, but I will have Israel sifted among the nations, as corn is sifted in a sieve, when not a single good grain falls through.

56. The person responsible for the addition of this group did not wish his readers to think that Yahweh would leave real sin unpunished.

ix. 10. A violent death will be the lot of the sinners among my people, though they think that no misfortune shall touch or fall upon them.

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<sup>1</sup>. . . . <sup>1</sup>MT places these words after "negroes."

<sup>2</sup> MT has "I will."

<sup>3</sup>. . . . <sup>3</sup> MT places these words at the end of v. 8.



57. After the punishment will come restoration. This is quite possibly the utterance of a Jew who survived the destruction of Jerusalem, a hundred and eighty years after the time of Amos, and hoped that the ruins around him might be restored.

ix. 11, 12. In the Millennium I will put up the fallen hut of David and build up its<sup>1</sup> broken and ruined walls again, and its buildings shall be as before. And so they shall occupy what is left of Edom and all the other countries, because my name is on them.

This is the oracle of Yahweh of Hosts who does this.

58. A promise of material prosperity.

ix. 13, 14. The time is coming—this is Yahweh's oracle—when the seasons will be so fruitful that there will be no interval between ploughing and harvest, or between vintage and seedtime. And all the mountains and hills will melt with their torrents of sweet wine. And I will bring back those of my people Israel who have been deported, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. And they themselves shall enjoy the wine and the fruit of the vineyards and orchards which they plant. And I will see that they are too firmly rooted to be pulled up from the land which I have given them.

So says Yahweh your God.

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<sup>1</sup> So LXX; MT has "their."

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